

# DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOMS

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**"Differentiation is an organized yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning to meet kids where they are and help them to achieve maximum growth as learners."** Tomlinson, Carol Ann, *The Differentiated Classroom*, 1999.

**When implementing a differentiated classroom the teacher must consider such differences as the students':**

1. learning styles, skill levels, and rates
2. language proficiency
3. background experiences and knowledge
4. motivation
5. ability to attend
6. social and emotional development
7. levels of abstraction
8. physical needs

## Key Principles of a Differentiated Classroom

1. The teacher is clear about what matters in the content area.
2. The teacher understands, appreciates, and builds upon student differences.
3. Assessment and instruction are inseparable.
4. The teacher adjusts content, process, and product in response to student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.
5. All students participate in respectful work.
6. Students and teachers are collaborators in learning.
7. Goals are maximum growth and continued success.
8. Flexibility is the hallmark of a differentiated classroom.

## Differentiated Learning

Differentiation means **getting the best out of every pupil so that they are able to show what they know, understand and what they can do**. Differentiate teaching is a process which includes planning curriculum aims, teaching strategies, resources, teaching methods, and ways of interacting with pupils while giving special consideration to:

- Differentiation between pupils according to ability
- The different ways pupils learn
- The different speeds at which pupils learn

Differentiation between pupils also occurs in attitude, background, gender, and support, so that a **challenge is provided for every pupil**. The following show the ways that differentiation can appear:

- In the planning
- In the teaching
- In the learning
- In the feedback to pupils

#### Planning:

- A specific purpose to the work (clear aims)
- Linked to purpose and objectives of the course
- Purpose clear to pupils and teacher (core, extended and reinforcement)

#### Methods:

- Balance of activities over time in lessons
- Classroom organization suits the learning activity
- Reinforcement techniques encourage pupils to move on
- Vocabulary and linguistic requirements are relevant (differentiation between students, suitable tasks and support, readable materials, preparing appropriate materials)

#### Expectations:

- Explain what is required
- An adequate level of challenge
- Tasks which test students' understanding of the materials
- Opportunities to reinforce the lower ability pupils
- Extension activities to challenge the more able pupils (effective questioning)

#### Interaction:

- Effective communication between teacher and students
- Effective questioning to facilitate learning
- Pupil presentations to bring out understanding

#### Support:

- Sensitive oral feedback
- Constructive marking
- Emphasis on improvement

### **STANDARDS-ALIGNED CLASSROOM**

Standards and Benchmarks

*Select Assessment Method*

*Select, Modify or Create an Assessment*

*Select, Modify or Create Aligned Lesson Plan*

*Evaluate Student Work*

Based on Knowledge, Reasoning, Skill, & Product

## CONTENT/ PROCESS/ PRODUCT KEYS TO DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING

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**Content Differentiation** is organized around key concepts. Everyone is given access to the same core concepts, skills, and principles. What is adjusted is the degree of complexity. Tomlinson (1999) states that "readiness based adjustments are made by the teacher to offer a range of learning tasks."

The following are a few modifications that can be used in differentiated content:

1. Concrete to abstract, in terms of manipulatives, materials or ideas with a shift from facts and definitions to **relationships between key concepts**.
2. Simple to complex, the shift from studying factors separately to finding the **interrelationship of subject matter** and the use of resources and research to **arrive at a conclusion**.
3. Provide variety, to go beyond the material presented.

**Process Differentiation** is the activity that helps students comprehend the ideas, skills, and strategies that are delivered through instruction or explored through guided research. This process provides the scaffolding that students need to build their levels (readiness to proficient) and apply their newfound knowledge.

The following are a few examples of many process-oriented tasks:

1. Higher levels of thinking, involving cognitive challenge using Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Processes or QAR (Question/Answer/Relationship) --- use critical and creative thinking.
2. Open-ended tasks---encourages risk-taking and stresses that there is not always one solution to a problem.
3. Multiple intelligences---allows the student to work in a modality that best suits his learning style.
4. Cooperative and flexible grouping of students.
5. Problem based learning
6. Learning Process Verbs (Bloom's Taxonomy)

KNOWLEDGE	COMPREHENSION	APPLICATION	ANALYSIS	SYNTHESIS	EVALUATION
Explain	Explain	Organize	Compare/ contrast	Add to	Interpret
List	Translate	Group	Take apart	Predict	Judge
Observe	Group	Collect	Specify	Combine	Justify
Demonstrate	Regroup	Apply	Dissect	Translate	Conclude
Describe	Restate	Summarize	Relate	Alter	Criticize
Uncover	Connect	Order	Deceive	Hypothesize	Solve
Recognize	Conclude	Classify	Determine	Design	Decide
Discover	Summarize	Use	Differentiate	Reconstruct	Infer
Experiment	Describe	Construct	Divide	Re Name	Verify
Tell	Show	Relate	Isolate	Reorganize	
Recall	Paraphrase	Code	Order	Extend	
		Model	Distinguish	Vary	
			Take away	Substitute	
				Modify	

**QAR Process Verbs:**

<b>RIGHT THERE</b>	<b>THINK &amp; SEARCH</b>	<b>AUTHOR &amp; YOU</b>	<b>ON YOUR OWN</b>
State	What things are alike	Form a hypothesis	Give your opinion
Does	What conclusion	Design	Will it work
Who	Distinguish between	What is necessary	Defend your position
When	Tell why	Under what circumstances	Suppose
What	Summarize	How can you use it	According to your understanding
Where	Find the evidence	Compose	What do you think
Name	Search for	Devise	Take a guess
Tell	Find	Illustrate	Is it good
How many	What is possible	Create	Judge on the facts you know
Define	Explain	Make use of	What would happen if
Spell	What alternative	Demonstrate	
List	Argue all sides	State the consequence	How would it make you feel
Can you remember	How many different ways	In what ways	Is there a better solution
Describe	Restate (main ideas)	How could it happen	Which do you like best
Identify	Reconstruct	Solve this	How do you rate it
Relate	Explore	How many new ways	What do you think will succeed
Sequence	Consolidate from more than one source	How could it be done differently	What do you think will succeed

**Product Differentiation** is the culminating projects that allow students to demonstrate and extend what they have learned. Products reveal whether students can apply learning beyond the classroom to solve problems and take action. Different students can create different products. The following are some suggestions:

<b>VERBALIZE</b>	<b>WRITE</b>	<b>CREATE</b>	<b>PERFORM</b>
Oral Report	Theme	Collage	Simulation
Panel Discussion	Research	Poster	Role Play
Debate	Report	Model	Drama
Brainstorm	Poems	Puzzles	Music
Interview	Essays	Games	Dance
Court Trial	Stories	Brochure	Pantomime
	Diary Entries	Commercials	Commercial
	Plays	DJ Radio Show	DJ Radio Show
	Cookbook	Game	Play
	Movie/Video	Experiment	
	Book Chapter	Computer Graphic	
	Picture Book	Interactive Bulletin Board	

Keep in mind that each of these products should have non-negotiable objects attached to their outcomes. A rubric should be designed to share the attributes needed to fulfill the product and see it to fruition. One project-based rubric site is

<http://www.rubricstar-4teachers.org/>